

CAPSULE SUMMARY  
RJ's Open Pit Barbecue (PG: 79-75)  
1394 Crain Highway, SW  
Prince George's County, Maryland

Built between 1950 and 1960, this small vernacular restaurant illustrates patterns of transportation and commercial development in southern Maryland during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Automobiles and the expanding road and highway systems contributed to widespread commercial and residential development well beyond the rail corridors during the Modern Period. As development and population density increased in Prince George's County, new road networks were erected to ease the movement of goods and people. The extension of Crain Highway to the Potomac and the completion of the Governor Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge spanning the Potomac River bridge near Pope's Creek in 1940 served to link Charles and Prince George's Counties with transportation networks from Florida to New York. As a result, Crain Highway became the main route for commercial truck transportation.

The restaurant at 1394 Crain Highway is set in the parking lot of a suburban strip mall facing Maryland Route 301. Located near the building is a median strip with grass and mature trees. The freestanding building is one story in height and five bays in width. Nearly square in plan, the building is set on a parged concrete foundation and the wood frame walls are clad in vinyl siding laid in a diagonal pattern. A one story, one bay enclosed front porch extends across the entire façade of the restaurant. A flat roof with a parapet covers the small building.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
MD INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Inventory No. PG: 79-75

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1. Name of Property

=====

historic name \_\_\_\_\_

common/other name RJ's Open Pit Barbecue

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2. Location

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street & number 1394 Crain Highway, SW not for publication \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Bowie vicinity \_\_\_\_\_ state Maryland code MD

county Prince George's County code 33 zip code 20716

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

N/A

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4. National Park Service Certification

N/A

=====

5. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property (Check all that apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing      Noncontributing

<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Is this property listed in the National Register?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Listing \_\_\_\_\_

No X

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties  
RJ's Open Pit Barbecue  
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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE

Sub: Restaurant

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE

Sub: Restaurant

=====

7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Vernacular

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation Solid: Parged Concrete

Roof Flat: Not Visible

Walls Frame: Vinyl Siding

other \_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 7-1

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties

RJ's Open Pit Barbecue

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8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☒ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties

RJ's Open Pit Barbecue

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1394 Crain Highway, SW

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Prince George's County, Maryland

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Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1950-1960  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates c. 1950  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation Undefined  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 8-1

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties

RJ's Open Pit Barbecue

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, legal records, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Charles County Land and Will Records. Charles County Courthouse and the  
Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, Maryland.

Rivoire, J. Richard. *Homeplaces: Traditional Domestic Architecture of Charles County, Maryland*. Crownsville, MD: Maryland Historical Trust, 1990.

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 316,083 square feet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property at 1394 Crain Highway, SW is designated as Parcel G, Grid D1 as indicated on Map 70.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property at 1394 Crain Highway, SW has historically been associated with Parcel G since the building's construction in the middle of the twentieth century.

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11. Form Prepared By

=====

name/title R. Weidlich and C. Novelli, Architectural Historians  
organization EHT Traceries, Inc. date June 21, 1999  
street & number 5420 Western Avenue telephone 301/656-5283  
city or town Chevy Chase state MD zip code 20815

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12. Property Owner

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name Pointer Ridge Shopping Center, Levitt & Sons  
street & number 70 Deer Shore Square telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town N. Babylon state NY zip code 11703

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. PG: 79-75

Section 7 Page 1

RJ's Open Pit Barbecue  
name of property  
Prince George's County, MD  
county and state

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The restaurant at 1394 Crain Highway is set in the parking lot of a suburban strip mall facing Maryland Route 301. Located near the building is a median strip with grass and mature trees. Constructed circa 1950, the freestanding building is one story in height and five bays in width. Nearly square in plan, the building is set on a parged concrete foundation and the wood frame walls are clad in vinyl siding laid in a diagonal pattern. A one story, one bay enclosed front porch extends across the entire façade of the restaurant. A flat roof with a parapet covers the small building.

**EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION:**

The façade or the southeast elevation of the building is five bays in width. A one bay wide porch, covered with a shed roof, extends across the entire façade of the building. The porch has been enclosed with vinyl siding and 1/1 double hung aluminum sash windows. The ends of the porch are cut out with recessed single leaf doors that are wood paneled with twelve lights. Detailing the porch at the recessed entries are vinyl railings and balusters as well as square wood posts. Short, wood frame stairs lead to the entries at each end. Behind the porch at the first story are three replacement 1/1 aluminum windows with wood sills.

The northeast elevation is relatively devoid of decoration. The one story elevation is pierced by two 1/1 double hung metal sash windows. The two windows, like those on the façade, have wood sills.

The rear or northwest elevation has a single leaf door with a metal storm door. Leading to this entry is a one story, wood stairway with a wood railing and wood balusters. The southwest elevation is practically identical to the northeast elevation, with two 1/1 double hung metal sash windows. These windows with their wood sills are the only decoration on this elevation.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
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Section 8 Page 1

RJ's Open Pit Barbecue  
name of property  
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=====

Built between 1950 and 1960, this small vernacular restaurant illustrates patterns of transportation and commercial development in southern Maryland during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Automobiles and the expanding road and highway systems contributed to widespread commercial and residential development well beyond the rail corridors during the Modern Period. As development and population density increased in Prince George's County, new road networks were erected to ease the movement of goods and people. The extension of Crain Highway to the Potomac and the completion of the Governor Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge spanning the Potomac River bridge near Pope's Creek in 1940 served to link Charles and Prince George's Counties with transportation networks from Florida to New York. As a result, Crain Highway became the main route for commercial truck transportation. There was also a tremendous growth in the number of commercial establishments built along the Robert Crain Highway, and its successor, U.S. 301, to cater to the burgeoning tourist trade and to new residential development. These included motels, fast food restaurants, shopping centers, and service stations. Architecturally, this building has no features that would connect it to a stylistic movement.



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CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. PG: 79-75

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RJ's Open Pit Barbecue  
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county and state

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National Register Evaluation:

The restaurant at 1394 Crain Highway, SW is not eligible due to the fact that it does not meet National Register Criteria A, B, C, or D. Preliminary research has not revealed any association between the building and events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history (Criterion A) or the lives of persons significant in our past (Criterion B). Although the building provides an example of vernacular rural architecture, it is neither unusual nor distinguished; it does not represent the work of a master or display high artistic merit (Criterion C). There is no evidence that the property is likely to yield information important in history or prehistory (Criterion D). Thus, the property is not National Register-eligible.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

Eligibility recommended \_\_\_\_\_ Not Recommended X

Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Review, OPS: *[Signature]* Date: 11/1/99

Reviewer, NR Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
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RJ's Open Pit Barbecue  
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county and state

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HISTORIC CONTEXT:

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Development Period (s):

Modern Period (1930-present)

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme (s):

Economic

RESOURCE TYPE(S)

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function (s): COMMERCE/TRADE/Restaurant

Known Design Source: Unknown

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
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**Chain of Title:**

February 18, 1909: John C. and Frances C. Jones to Samuel Hamilton Spragins  
Land Records of Prince George's County  
Liber 50 Folio 349

November 22, 1928: Samuel Hamilton and Mattie T. Spragins to Matilda Wood Duvall  
Land Records of Prince George's County  
Liber 332 Folio 459

November 22, 1928: Matilda Wood Duvall to Samuel Hamilton and Mattie T. Spragins  
Land Records of Prince George's County  
Liber 332 Folio 461

May 13, 1954: Mattie T. Spragins, widow, to Pacific Holding Corp.  
Land Records of Prince George's County  
Liber 1732 Folio 115

May 13, 1954: Pacific Holding Corp. to Mattie T. Spragins  
Land Records of Prince George's County  
Liber 1732 Folio 118

December 12, 1959: Mattie T. Spragins, widow; Samuel H. and Ann O'Connell Spragins; Clewell and Margaret S. Howell; and Melchijah and Betsy Rochester Spragins to Henry H. Canton; John P. D'Angelo; James W. Braden; and R. Warren Ammann, tenants in partnership.  
Land Records of Prince George's County  
Liber 2406 Folio 458

March 29, 1965: Henry H. Canton; John P. D'Angelo; James W. Braden; and R. Warren Ammann to Marvin Green  
Land Records of Prince George's County  
Liber 3142 Folio 95

March 2, 1966: Marvin and Fritzie Green to Tradewinds Investment Corp.  
Land Records of Prince George's County  
Liber 3290 Folio 267

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

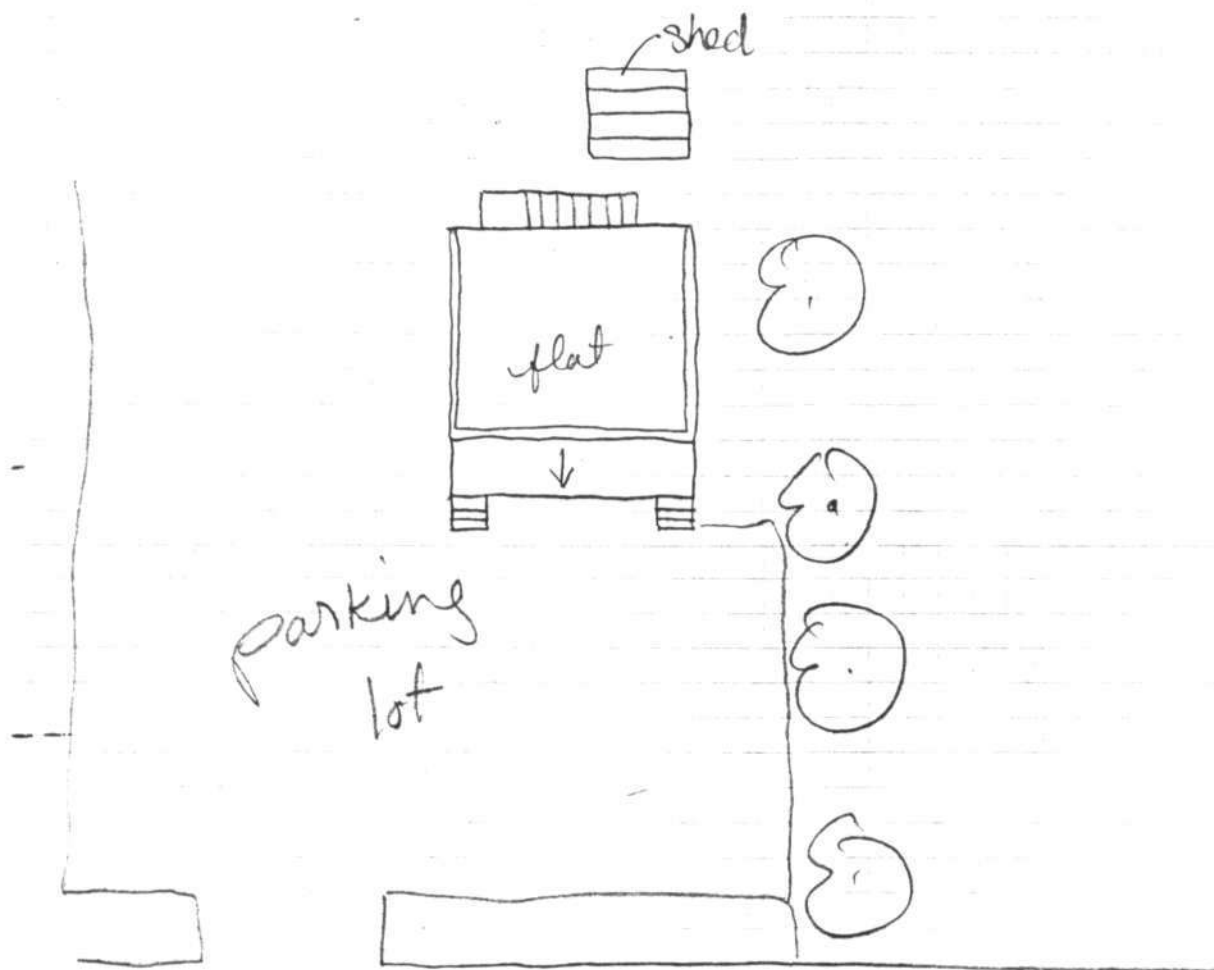
Inventory No. PG: 79-75

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March 25, 1966	Tradewinds Investment Corp. to Greenacre Estates Inc. Land Records of Prince George's County Liber 3298 Folio 470
February 28, 1967	Greenacre Estates Inc. merged with Levitt and Sons, Inc. Corporation Records of Prince George's County Liber 82 Folio 529
December 16, 1970	Levitt and Sons, Inc. to Pointer Ridge Shopping Center Company Land Records of Prince George's County Liber 3920 Folio 54

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R.J.'s Open Pit Bar-B-Q PG: 79-75  
1394 SW Crain Highway

Prince George's County  
Maryland

Resource Sketch Map 1999  
Not Drawn to Scale

1394 CRAIN HIGHWAY, SW  
PG: 79-75

2901 CRAIN HIGHWAY, SW  
PG: 79-76

3807 OLD CRAIN HIGHWAY  
PG: 79-77

4000 CRAIN HIGHWAY, SE  
PG: 79-78

4109 CRAIN HIGHWAY, SW  
PG: 79-79

15008 MARLBORO PIKE  
PG: 79-80

BLADENSBURG 14 MI  
LARGO (JUNC. MD. 214) 7.6 MI



Bristol USGS Quad





PG: 79-75

1394 SW CRAIN HIGHWAY  
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD

TRACERIES

JUNE 1999

MD SHPD

South corner

1 of 4





PG: 79-75

1394 SW CRAIN HIGHWAY  
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD

TRACERIES

JUNE 1999

MD SHPO

northeast elevation

2 of 4



PG: 79-75

1394 SW CRAIN HIGHWAY

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD

TRACERIES

JUNE 1999

MD SHPD

west corner

3 of 4



90:79.75

1394 SW CRAIN HIGHWAY

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD

TRACERIES

JUNE 1999

MD SHPD

southwest elevation

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